

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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1980-81 WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON FRAMEWORKS SET

The final waterfowl hunting season frameworks established for 1980-81 by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are generally the same as last year.

Nationwide

--Stabilizing duck season frameworks and limits at 1979-80 levels. Regulations have been generally unchanged in several regions of the U.S. in recent years as part of an effort to better understand how hunting regulations affect duck harvests and populations. The effort will be expanded to encompass all four flyways this fall. Plans call for most season length and bag limits for ducks to remain at 1979-80 levels for 5 years, during which time the United States will join Canada in studies of the relationships among hunting regulations, duck harvests, and duck populations. By stabilizing the major duck hunting regulations, waterfowl researchers and managers will be better able to evaluate the effects of factors such as habitat conditions, production, disease, and natural mortality upon harvests and the population dynamics of ducks.

Recent studies by the Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that stabilizing the regulations will have no significant effect on duck populations. The experiment could be terminated quickly, however, if population levels indicate a need for more restrictive regulations. An environmental assessment describing the stabilized regulations plan is now available.

Key aspects of the frameworks, including minor changes from last year, follow:

Atlantic Flyway

--Zoning in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. These States are offered the option to select waterfowl seasons by geographical areas.

--Redheads. The daily bag limit under conventional regulations is being increased from 1 daily and 1 in possession to 2 daily and 4 in possession with no area closure restrictions. In those areas of the flyway open to canvasback harvest the daily bag limit on redheads under conventional regulations is 2, or 1 redhead and 1 canvasback.

Mississippi Flyway

--Changes in duck and goose limits. Bag and possession limits for Canada and white-fronted geese are now separated, and with a few exceptions, possession limits for all waterfowl will be twice the daily bag limit. Redheads will not be

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